

A NEW SPECIES OF *MORDELLISTENA* (COLEOPTERA, FAM.  
MORDELLIDAE) PARASITIC ON TERMITES.

By GERALD F. HILL, Townsville, N.Q.

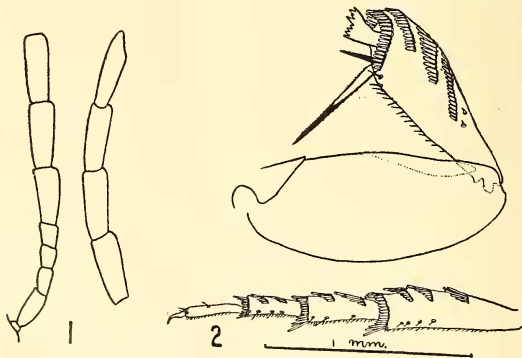
(Two Text-figures.)

[Read 30th August, 1922.]

*MORDELLISTENA ERYTHRODERES*, n.sp. (Text-figs. 1 and 2.)

Black, prothorax, part of pygidium, inner half of hind coxae and spurs to hind tibiae reddish-flavous. Densely clothed with short pubescence, black on the black parts, golden on the red, but silvery on parts of the under surface and legs.

Moderately long and thin. Antennae (Text-fig. 1) rather long, extending almost to base of second segment of abdomen. Scutellum small. Pygidium acute but rather short for the genus. Hind-tibiae with longer spur more than 3 times



Text-figs. 1-2. *Mordellistena erythroderes*, n.sp.

1. Antenna. 2. Hind-leg.

the length of the shorter, with three long oblique rows of bluntly-tipped, flattened setae; basal joint of hind tarsi also has three oblique rows of similar setae, second and third with two each (Text-fig. 2). Length 5—5.5 mm.

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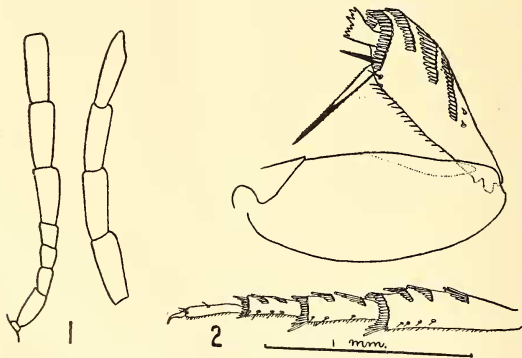
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A rather large species readily distinguished from all other Australian species of the genus by its large size and bright red prothorax; at first glance the specimens look like elongate ones of *Mordella ruficollis* without the elytral markings, but the hind-tibiae and tarsi have the characteristic features of *Mordellistena*.

Type and two co-types in South Australian Museum.

*Locality*.—North Queensland: Palm Island.

#### *Biology.*

The above beetles were bred from a piece of rotten log infested with a recently described species of Termite, *Calotermes* (*Glyptotermes*) *nigrolabrum* Hill (These Proceedings, xlv., p. 437), which was gathered in a scrub-covered ravine on the southern end of the largest of this group of islands (22/6/21). Larvae and pupae were noticed amongst the termites in the tunnels through the rotten, spongy wood. Specimens of these and other termitophilous insects were secured in the field and a large piece of the log, containing probably several hundred termites, was brought back and placed in a jar for further observation. Beyond keeping the wood moist, no further attention was paid to it until about the 15th July, when the appearance of the alate forms of the termite was expected. On the latter date some of the wood was cut open, exposing only a small colony of termites and one beetle pupa, all of which were returned to the jar with as little disturbance as possible. The first beetle emerged on the 20th August and the others on or about 27th August. Unfortunately it was not discovered until too late that the tube containing larval and pupal stages had been lost. As the termite and its enemy are probably both fairly common in certain localities on the island it is hoped to secure further material for description at an early date.

I am greatly indebted to Mr. A. M. Lea for the examination of, and expressions of opinion upon, this interesting insect.

As a beneficial insect, the species described above is hardly likely to prove of any practical value unless it could be established in the colonies of some of the more destructive species of Termites. Its present only known host is not now, nor is it likely to become in the future, of any economic importance; moreover, the habits of this and allied species of Termites are so entirely different from those of, say, *Mastotermes darwiniensis*, *Rhinotermes* spp., *Coptotermes* spp. and other injurious species, that it seems improbable that a parasite of the former could ever become a factor in controlling the latter.

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